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ABSTRACT

Two questionnaires were mailed to 40 students enrolled in the Cooperative Education Program at Mississippi County Community College to determine their perceptions of their work experience and of the Co-op Program. One survey form asked students about difficulties on the job, adequacy of information about their duties, completeness of instructions, their co-workers' enthusiasm and cooperativeness, their surroundings, their participation in decision-making, and what would have made them more comfortable. They were also asked if they were told whom to contact with job problems, if they were given enough responsibility, if the chain of authority was well defined, and if their job experience changed their career choice. The second questionnaire focused on the Co-op Program in terms of help during registration, assistance offered, meetings with Co-op staff, services used (e.g., placement, information, and counseling), services desired, contacts with Faculty Coordinator and Program Director, site visits by the Faculty Coordinator and his/her effectiveness, and employer receptiveness. Survey findings, based on a 65% response rate, revealed that, although students were generally satisfied with the Co-op experience, they had several adjustment problems, that 35% changed their career objectives based upon their experiences, and that many students were dissatisfied with their Faculty Coordinator. (AYC)

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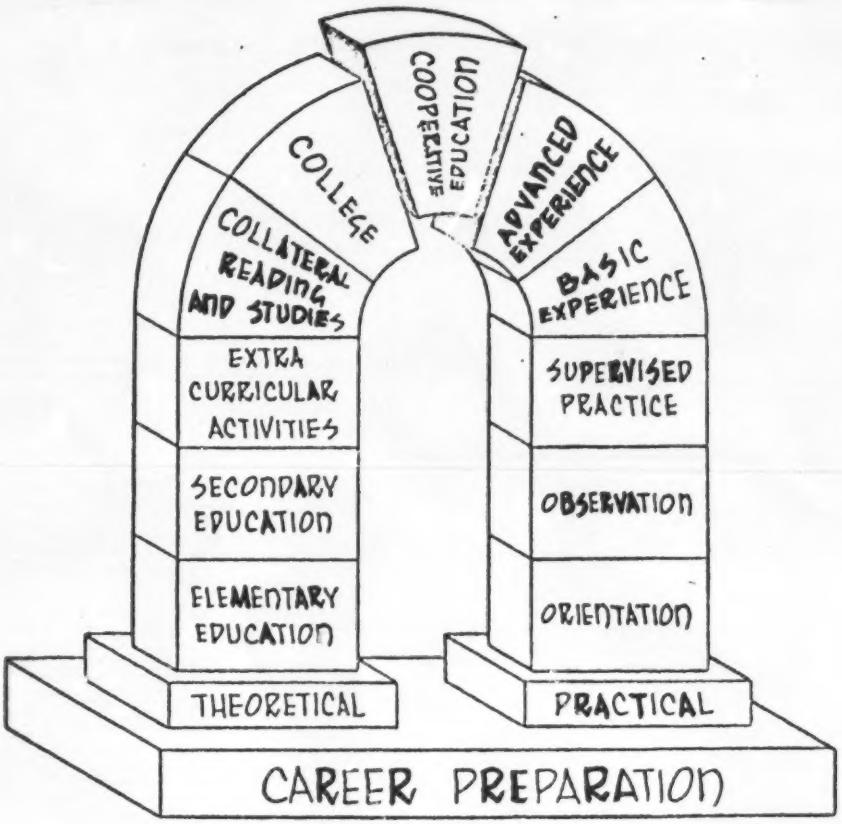
REPORT OF A STUDY

OF

CALENDAR YEAR 1979

CO-OP STUDENTS



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MISSISSIPPI COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION:

The success of most college programs is dependent to some degree upon the student's preparation. If students perceive a program to be worthwhile then the chances of that program being successful are good. This report is a study of the perceptions of MCCC's co-op students for the calendar year of 1979.

PURPOSE:

This study primarily was designed to collect data regarding the perceptions of calendar year 1979 co-op students about:

1. Their work experience
2. The Co-op Program

Opportunities were given in some instances for students to respond with written comments.

METHOD:

Two questionnaires were mailed to 40 calendar year 1979 co-op students. A letter of explanation and a postpaid, self-addressed envelope were included. Respondents were allowed to remain anonymous. However, the vast majority of students identified themselves on the questionnaire. Twenty-six (65%) of the students responded. This compares favorably with the 34% response for calendar year 1978. It is felt that a follow-up mailing contributed significantly to this increase.

CO-OP STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR WORK EXPERIENCE

Sixty-seven percent of respondents expressed some degree of adjustment problems associate with their job. This compares with 69% in 1978. Problems involved orientation, self-esteem, relating to the employer, training, emotions, dealing with clients, setting and meeting objectives, discipline, fitting in and learning procedures. These were very similar to the problems expressed by 1978 students.

Ninety-two percent of the co-op students felt that they were adequately informed of what was expected and about their duties. This compares with 81% in 1978. All but one respondent knew who to contact if they had problems and questions about the job.

Again, most co-op students believed that their job instructions were adequate. Fifty-seven percent felt their instructions were somewhat complete (38%-1978), while 31% regarded their instructions as complete (56% - 1978). Twelve percent felt that their instructions were incomplete.

Fifty-four percent of the students responded to the question, "What could have been done to make you feel more comfortable?" This is an increase of 23%.

Eight-five percent felt that the people they worked with shared their enthusiasm on the job. Sixty-seven percent felt they were given the right amount of responsibility, fifteen percent said they were given too much responsibility, and 17% felt they were not given enough responsibility.

Most student workers sensed the freedom to express themselves to the people they worked with and thought their surroundings were helpful in doing their job.

Eighty percent of respondents felt that they played an active part in the decision making process (50% - 1978). The same number also believed they had the freedom to be creative or innovative.

Sixty-six percent of those responding perceived the chain of authority to be well defined (69% - 1978) and an overwhelming number (96%) felt that the people they worked with were cooperative. Surprisingly, thirty-five percent of the respondents reported that their work experience had changed their minds about their career preference. This compares with 25% in 1978.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM EVALUATION

One hundred percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with help during registration and with the assistance received at the Co-op office.

Ninety percent of the students felt that their work experience contributed to their knowledge of Cooperative Education (94% - 1978). Ninety-six percent of the co-op students were satisfied with the individual attention they received from co-op personnel (81% - 1978).

Services provided by the Co-op office and used by students were in the areas of Occupational Information, Job Placement, Guidance Information, College Information, Vocational Counseling, and Audio-Visual Programs.

Twelve percent (3 students) expressed some dissatisfaction with the programs administered by the Co-op Office. The nature of the complaints seemed to be associated with the Solar Technology Cooperative Education Program.

All respondents listed at least one on campus contact with their faculty coordinator with visits lasting between one half hour and one hour. However, three respondents reported no job site visits by their faculty coordinator and five reported only one job site visit. All reported visits at the job site exceeded one half hour. Five students reported visits of one hour or more.

Ninety-six percent of respondents felt that their co-op experience contributed to their professional growth. Faculty coordinator's effectiveness was rated average or better by 84% of the respondents. However, four students rated their faculty coordinator below average. Last year only one student rated below average in this area. Ninety-six percent of the students rated the Director's effectiveness above average or excellent. One student's rating was average.

Ninety-two percent of the respondents felt that their employer was receptive to their work experience (81% - 1978).

See Appendices I and II for compiled raw data.

CONCLUSIONS

It appears that a follow-up mailing contributed significantly to the increased response by co-op students to the questionnaire. The sampling is large enough to justify the following general observations, comments, and recommendations.

The great majority of respondent's work experience continue to be meaningful and rewarding to the students. Most students experienced problems and situations on the job that are inherent in the real world work environment. They also dealt with these problems effectively. One student did quit her job due to a personality conflict and possible sexual harrassment.

The overall quality of co-op work experience continues to be very good and appears to be compatible with the co-op method. However, some Solar Technology students expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with their co-op assignment. The quality of the solar students' work experiences may have been less than desired because the solar plant was not in operation on schedule. Also, it appears the Director could have communicated more effectively with the Solar Technology Instructor/Manager in beginning the Solar Technology Cooperative Education Program.

The Co-op Office expanded services to students. Students use and satisfaction also increased.

On campus contacts between students and co-op personnel were excellent. However, some students did not receive an adequate number of job site visits by their faculty coordinator.

Co-op work experience was a major factor in career preference determination for 35% of the respondents.

Employers continue to demonstrate receptiveness to the work experiences of co-op studnets from the student's point of view. Overall effectiveness of the Co-op Program appears to be more than satisfactory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Disseminate this information to the faculty coordinators, faculty and administrative staff for their review and recommendations.

2. The Co-op Office should again re-examine and evaluate procedures and policies relative to job site visits by faculty coordinators. Teaching load versus the number of co-op students assigned should be considered in this review.

3. The Co-op Director should insure that all faculty coordinators fully understand all aspects of Co-op policies, procedures, and program operation.

4. Continue to monitor co-op students' work experiences to insure they meet the needs of students as well of those of the employers.

APPENDIX 1

MISSISSIPPI COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
HUMAN RELATIONS EVALUATION SURVEY

1. What was the most difficult problem you had on the job at first?

Learning my duties.

Finding materials needed to complete job.

Finding out my true capabilities and not being as good as I thought.

Geeting the feeling of things. Relating to the employer.

Change! Before Co-op, the memorization of terms and inferences had been the touchstone of my college education. Co-op included learning of attitudes, emotion, experiences; it included more vast of an area.

In operating the switchboard, I had a very hard time trying to learn how to go back on the line after connecting them to another office.

Controlling my emotions.

To ask for money from patients.

Learning the product and correct procedures in building the product.

Having responsibilities (objectives) put forth at the beginning of the program.

Finding a good place to work and get situated.

Being able to read blueprints.

The work was good, but I had to read a lot of material on my own to understand the job.

Getting it. As in any new job, learning the office procedures.

I had difficulty "fitting in" to the age group at Armorel Senior Citizens Center.

Getting it.

Discipline was always my problem.

Learning different assembly lines.

Making the adjustment from having someone tell me what to do and me telling other people what to do.

2. Do you feel you were adequately informed of what was expected of you and what your duties were?

YES 24 NO 2 NO RESPONSE

3. Were you told whom you were to contact if you had problems or questions?

YES 25 NO 1 NO RESPONSE

4. Did you feel you were given complete instructions?

INCOMPLETE 3 SOMEWHAT COMPLETE 15 COMPLETE 8

5. What could have been done to make you feel more comfortable?

One of the teachers could have given me credit for knowing something. She acted as if I was absolutely stupid in a lot of matters.

The entire thing more organized.

Someone to train me.

My boss and I had a personality conflict, sometimes he would hug me and call me darling and I HATED THAT, however, I need to make it plain that I go the job myself. Co-op did not get the job for me and when I quit, they did not put another student on the job. I regret that my situation between my boss and me was so difficult because I would like to have continued on the Co-op Program.

People weren't friendly at first.

A little less confusion about placement at project.

An introductory period.

If the employer had given us a little more responsibility.

I could have been more punctual with my assignments.

Have someone sit in with me.

To have written job assignments.

Given a specific place and tools to work with.

Now everything is fine.

Communication between advisor and employer was terrible. Much room for improvement.

Nothing.

6. Do you feel those people you worked with shared your enthusiasm on the job?

   Yes (22) No (4) No Response

7. Do you feel you were given responsibility?

   Too Little (2) Some (4) Just Enough (16) Too Much (4)

8. Did you feel free to disagree with or question those people you worked with?

   Yes (22) No (4) No Response

9. Were your surroundings helpful in doing your job?

   Yes (22) No (3) No Response (1)

10. Do you feel you played an active part in decision making?

    Yes (20) NO (5) No Response (1)

11. Do you feel you were given the freedom to be creative or innovative?

    Yes (20) No (5) No Response (1)

12. Do you feel the chain of authority was well defined?

    Not enough (6) Yes (20) No Response

13. Has your current job experience changed your mind about your career preferences?

    Yes (9) No (17) No Response

14. Do you feel the people you worked with are cooperative?

    Yes (25) No (1) No Response

MISSISSIPPI COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM EVALUATION SURVEY

1. Do you feel you had the proper help during registration time?

   Yes (26)
   No (0)
   No Response (0)

2. Have you received satisfactory assistance at the Cooperative Education Office?

   Yes (25)
   No (0)
   No response (1)

3. Have you learned more about Cooperative Education while in the Work Experience Program?

   Yes (23)
   No (3)
   No response (0)

4. Were you able to have an individual meeting with someone in the Cooperative Education Program to help you with a special problem or to provide any needed information?

   Yes (25)
   No (1)
   No response (0)

5. Please check the services you have been involved with at the Cooperative Education Office:

   Occupational Information (15)
   Job Placement (13)
   Guidance Information (16)
   College Information (13)
   Vocational Counseling (3)
   Audio-Visual Programs (4)

6. What additional information or services would you like the Co-op Office to provide, if any?

   Plan the jobs for the students better in the solar program.

   If possible, some type of system for checking out the faculty coordinator.

   Plan the jobs for the students better in the solar program.

7. How many on-campus contacts did you have with your Faculty Coordinator?

   None (0)
   One (3)
   Two (3)
   More than two (17)
   No response (1)

8. What was the average length of these visits?

1/2 hour (15)
1 hour (7)
More than 1 hour (0)
No response (4)

9. How many on-campus contacts did you have with the Director?

none (1)
one (4)
two (4)
more than two (15)
no response (2)

10. What was the average length of these visits?

1/2 hour (22)
1 hour (3)
more than one hour (1)
no response (0)

11. Was it possible for you to be present for the Faculty Coordinator visits with your supervisor?

Yes (14)
No (12)
No response (0)

12. How many job site visits did your Faculty Coordinator make?

none (4)
one (6)
two (5)
don't know (3)
no response (8)

13. What was the average length of these visits?

1/2 hour (14)
1 hour (4)
more than 1 hour (1)
no response (7)

14. Do you feel you have grown professionally as a result of working out measurable objectives that were mutually agreeable to you, your employer, and the instructor?

Yes (25)
No (1)
No response (0)

15. How would you rate your Faculty Coordinator's effectiveness in helping you understand and develop your educational objectives?

Below Average	(4)
Average	(7)
Above Average	(7)
Excellent	(7)
No response	(1)

16. How would you rate the Director's effectiveness in administering the Co-op program and in helping you understand and progress in the Co-op program?

Below Average (0)
Average (1)
Above Average (12)
Excellent (12)
No response (1)

17. Was your employer receptive to the work experience program?

Yes (23)
No (2)
No Response (1)

If not, why not?

He avoided meetings with Karen and he and I did not get along.

We could not work over eight hours a week.

Hard to examine as employer was MCCC.

18. Please feel free to make any additional comments regarding the program in the space below.

I feel that when choosing a teacher to put a student with, the teacher should be notified and she should be willing to work with the students. If she is not, the student should not be put with that teacher.

You need to give more time for classroom study and extend the credit.

More knowledgeable people in the solar field need to be utilized as resource people in helping make co-op experience more successful.

Director could get more involved in order to make the solar program better, and not take only the word of the faculty coordinator.

I think the program is great.

In my case, I was unfortunate to have an employer like I did but of course, that is not the program's fault because I had the job before i joined the co-op. I think co-op is very valuable and should be continued.

Overall, I think the program is doing very well and helps a lot of students.

I feel Mr. _____ is overloaded to be an effective coordinator in co-op. I have had him for two semesters and he hasn't had the time to visit the work site. However, he will help me anyway when I call the office. By not visiting the site he isn't fully aware of what is going on.

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